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1. **SB 198- Establishing the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council, Sponsored by Senator Halford**

As of 4/24, this bill was amended and passed by Senate HES Committee. It now moves to Senate Finance

Link to text and fiscal notes:

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_bill.asp?session=22&bill=SB198

H&SS has submitted a fiscal note of \$250,000 for this bill.

2. **HALFORD MEASURE SETS UP COUNCIL TO CURB SUICIDE**

EPIDEMIC: Yukon-Koyukuk, Valley areas see dramatic jump in rate among young people.

By Martha Bellisle
Anchorage Daily News

(Published April 24, 2001)

Juneau -- Young people in rural Alaska and the Mat-Su area are killing themselves at rates reaching epidemic levels, said Senate President Rick Halford. And in the rest of the state, suicide rates remain about double the national average.

To respond, Halford is pushing a bill to establish a 15-member suicide prevention council assigned to look for ways to reduce suicide rates, increase public awareness and enhance prevention programs and services across Alaska.

The Senate Health, Education and Social Services Committee passed the bill Monday. It now heads to Senate Finance.

"It is devastating to lose someone to suicide at any age, but it is especially tragic to lose a young person who has so much to live for," said Halford, R-Chugiak. "Suicide is a cry of despair, and we need to hear that cry and respond before someone takes their own life."

Alaska's suicide problem has become urgent in the past few years as health officials have watched dramatic jumps in the numbers of suicides among young people the Mat-Su area and in the six villages of the Yukon-Koyukuk region of the western Interior, said Susan Soule, who oversees the state's alcoholism and drug abuse services.

Ten young people killed themselves in Mat-Su between January 2000 and February 2001, according to the Department of Health and Social Services. The deaths included male and female students, members of middle-class families and high achievers.

Many students are seeking crisis counseling in the region, officials said. The Matanuska Susitna School District logged 367 counseling sessions in 2000, 97 percent for suicidal or homicidal mediation. It reported more than 235 sessions this school year.

In the Yukon-Koyukuk region, home to about 1,700 people, mostly in small towns, the suicides are devastating.

Six suicides, all alcohol-related, were documented last year in the region, officials said. And at least three more people killed themselves between October 2000 and last month.

The first step to breaking this apparently escalating pattern, Soule said, is to analyze the crisis. That's where the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council comes in.

"What we need is for this council to go to work and take a good look at what is happening and what should happen," Soule said. Then the group can help "write the blueprint" for the next series of steps.

That would come none too soon, Halford said. The last time there was a comprehensive look at suicide in Alaska was in 1988.

"We're behind a lot of other states that have a lot lower suicide rates," he added.

According to the bill, the council would be made up of two members each from the House and Senate and 11 members appointed by the governor.

That group would include two people from the executive branch of state government, members of several alcohol and mental health boards, a counselor from a secondary school, one person who has experienced a suicide by a family member, and someone younger than 18, among other people.

4. Tenth International Conference on Safe Communities – Anchorage, May 21-23, 2001 – register online!

CPSC's toll-free telephone hotline and web site provide information about recalled products and information on what to look for when buying products. Consumers can reach the hotline at 800-638-2772 or visit the web site at <http://www.cpsc.gov>. To get a list of major recalls, consumers should send a postcard to "Recall List," CPSC, Washington, D.C. 20207.

"CPSC sometimes learns of deaths or serious injuries caused by previously recalled products. We want to prevent these needless tragedies," said CPSC Chairman Ann Brown. "We urge people to get CPSC's list of recalls and check for old products that could be hazardous."

For more information, contact Martha Moore, injury surveillance and prevention program manager, (907) 465-8631, Martha_Moore@health.state.ak.us

Some hazardous products that might be in consumers' homes are:

--Cigarette Lighters without child-resistant mechanisms. CPSC's standard requires that both disposable cigarette lighters and novelty lighters made since 1994 must be hard for children under five years of age to operate. Novelty lighters are often in shaped like toys or other objects that appeal to children. According to CPSC data, this safety standard has helped reduce fire deaths from children playing with lighters by 43 percent since 1994. CPSC estimates that the standard for child-resistant lighters and novelty lighters should help save more than 100 lives each year. Never allow children access to cigarette or novelty lighters. Discard old non-child-resistant lighters.

--Extension cords with frayed or cut insulation, undersize wire, loose connections, or improper grounding can cause fires. Each year, there are approximately 5,700 fires and 40 deaths related to faulty extension cords, power strips, and surge protectors. Make sure your extension cords have a certification label from an independent testing lab such as UL (Underwriters Laboratories) or ETL (Intertek Testing Services).

--Black & Decker Spacemaker Optima Toasters (Model T1000, sold from 1994 through 1996). These 234,000 toasters were recalled because food can catch on fire, and when the toaster door automatically opens and the food rack extends beyond the door, flames from the food can escape the unit and expose kitchen cabinets and their contents to the fire. Black & Decker received 1,066 food fire complaints involving these toasters; 656 of these involved property damage and 8 involved burn injuries. Call Black & Decker toll-free at (800) 746-2159 to get a free replacement product.

--Kmart children's decorative lamps that pose a fire hazard. Kmart recalled 280,000 electric lamps (sold from January 1993 through March 2000) because a short circuit poses a fire hazard. There have been eight fires, two with property damage. Return the lamps to Kmart for a refund.

--Halogen torchiere floor lamps need a wire guard to help reduce the fire risk. Over 40 million halogen floor lamps made before 1997 were recalled because they have no guard to protect against fire. CPSC knows of 436 fires and 35 deaths since 1992 related to halogen lamps. People can get the wire guards by sending a postcard to Catalina Lighting Consumer Services, 18191 NW 68th Avenue, Miami, FL 33015.

--GE and Hotpoint dishwashers that present a fire hazard. General Electric Appliances Co. is voluntarily offering a free repair option in the form of a rewiring for its recalled GE and Hotpoint dishwashers. With the free rewire option, a GE-authorized technician will rewire the slide switch at no cost to consumers. This supplements the original rebate program announced October 19, 1999. The dishwashers have a slide switch that can melt and ignite, presenting a fire hazard. CPSC is aware of approximately 90 incidents associated with these dishwashers. GE manufactured 3.1 million of these dishwashers between 1983 and 1989. Call GE at (800) 599-2929.

All applications must be received by 5:00 PM EDT on May 2, 2001, so use the links above to visit the FEMA/USFA Web site for program updates and application forms. Get your department involved today!

www.nfpa.org/Education/Professional_Development_and_C/FEMA_USFA_Grant/fema_usfa_grant.html

At the request of Senators Peter G. Fitzgerald (R-Ill.) and John McCain (R-Ariz.), Heather Paul, Ph.D., executive director of the National SAFE KIDS Campaign, testified today for better child passenger safety laws before the Senate Commerce Subcommittee on Consumer Affairs, Foreign Commerce and Tourism.

In her testimony, Dr. Paul focused on the measures that are needed at the state and federal levels to better protect children as they “graduate” from child safety seats to adult restraint systems. She specifically addressed booster seats as a needed child restraint for older children, as well as other critical child occupant protection initiatives.

Sen. Fitzgerald, subcommittee Chair, and Sen. McCain, Chair of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, called upon SAFE KIDS, the National Highway Traffic

Safety Administration, the National Transportation Safety Board and other child passenger safety organizations to provide Congress with counsel for better protecting children. The subcommittee will examine gaps in federal and state laws that leave older child passengers at risk and discuss what the federal government could do better to protect these "forgotten children."

“We know how best to protect children when they travel, and we know that in order to persuade parents to buckle up their children we need to educate them about the benefits of proper restraint and the consequences of not restraining their children at all,” Dr. Paul said. “Most experts agree that strong occupant protection laws, coupled with consistent enforcement, are a proven way to get children and adults to buckle up. Yet shockingly, a majority of states have gaps in their coverage – leaving certain motor vehicle occupants, especially children, unprotected.”

The Senate hearing follows February's Child Passenger Safety Week when SAFE KIDS released *Child Passengers at Risk in America: A National Rating of Child Occupant Protection Laws*, the most comprehensive analysis of our nation's child occupant protection laws yet. SAFE KIDS experts reviewed each existing child occupant protection law and then measured it against a model law that provides a benchmark for every state legislature. Assessments were based on the language of each law, not on its implementation, enforcement or other state child passenger safety programs.

"Existing weaknesses and gaps are frightening. Nearly half of all states earned F's and more than a third earned D's. This rating of state child restraint laws clearly demonstrates that child safety needs to be a higher priority for our state legislators, governors and citizens. Inconsistent state laws do children a grave injustice," Dr. Paul said. "No parent in America should be dependent on a state law to ensure their child's safety on the road. SAFE KIDS believes that child passenger safety laws should apply equally across all states and the District of Columbia."

In response to report's findings, SAFE KIDS and its more than 300 coalitions have launched a five-year initiative to close the gaps in these laws, helping to ensure that all children are properly protected while traveling in motor vehicles. SAFE KIDS has provided tailored recommendations to each state legislature on how it can better protect its most vulnerable population - children. SAFE KIDS also supplied model provisions to guide legislators in their efforts.

"Nationwide, SAFE KIDS coalitions have been working to upgrade their state child occupant protection laws, educating families on how to restrain their children properly, and assisting states in their law enforcement efforts," Dr. Paul said.

Already, at least 20 states have introduced bills to upgrade their law and three states, Arkansas, Georgia and New Mexico, have passed improved laws.

Dr. Paul's testimony can be downloaded below in Adobe Acrobat (PDF).

www.safekids.org/content_documents/HPBoosterSeatHearing1.PDF

National SAFE KIDS Website:

www.safekids.org

9. Top Court Allows Minor Traffic Offense Arrest (Seat Belts)

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - A divided U.S. Supreme Court ruled on Tuesday that police may arrest individuals for minor traffic or other misdemeanor offenses punishable only by a fine, such as unbuckled seat belts or public littering.

The high court, by a 5-4 vote, declared the Constitution's Fourth Amendment, which bans unreasonable arrests and searches, does not prevent the police from making such arrests without a warrant.

"The question is whether the Fourth Amendment forbids a warrantless arrest for a minor criminal offense, such as a misdemeanor seat-belt violation punishable only by a fine. We hold that it does not," Justice David Souter said for the court majority.

The dissent warned the ruling "has potentially serious consequences for the everyday lives of Americans. A broad range of conduct falls within the category of fine-only misdemeanors," extending from traffic offenses to littering, for example.

Souter, normally one of the court's most liberal members, was joined by four conservatives -- Chief Justice William Rehnquist and Justices Antonin Scalia, Anthony Kennedy and Clarence Thomas.

Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, a moderate conservative, said in dissent, "The court neglects the Fourth Amendment's express command in the name of administrative ease" and it "cloaks the pointless indignity" that the woman in the case suffered "with the mantle of reasonableness."

Seat-Belt Law Violated

The case involved Gail Atwater, who in March 1997 was driving her pickup truck in Lago Vista, Texas, with her 3-year-old son and 5-year-old daughter in the front seat. None of them was wearing a seat belt.

Bart Turek, a Lago Vista police officer, observed the violations and pulled Atwater over. She told him she did not have her license and insurance information, as required by Texas law, because her purse had been stolen the day before.

Deciding to arrest Atwater, Turek handcuffed her and took her to the local jail, where she spent about one hour being processed and having bail set. She then was released on \$310 bond.

She was charged with driving without her seat belt fastened, failing to secure her children in seat belts, driving without a license and failing to provide proof of insurance.

She pleaded no contest to the misdemeanor seat belt offenses and paid a \$50 fine. The other charges were dropped.

Atwater and her husband then sued the city, Turek and the police chief, alleging they had violated her constitutional rights and seeking compensatory and punitive damages.

Rejects Historical Argument

Souter rejected Atwater's historical argument that the common law dating back to the founding of the country barred peace officers from making warrantless misdemeanor arrests, except in cases of "breach of the peace" involving violence.

Souter said the British Parliament, before the founding of the United States, allowed arrests for all sorts of minor offenses without violence, including night walking, game playing, cursing and negligent carriage-driving.

He said the laws in all 50 states and in the District of Columbia currently allow misdemeanor arrests by at least some peace officers without requiring any breach of the peace, as do a host of federal laws.

Souter refused to create a new rule of constitutional law forbidding a custodial arrest when conviction does not involve any jail time and the government cannot show any compelling need for immediate detention.

“Atwater's arrest satisfied constitutional requirements,” he said, even though it may have been inconvenient and embarrassing.

O'Connor disagreed. “There is no question that officer Turek's actions severely infringed Atwater's liberty and privacy.”

She warned that giving the police “such unbounded discretion carries with it grave potential for abuse” and said, “After today, the arsenal available to any officer extends to a full arrest and the searches permissible” under that arrest.

Timothy Lynch, director of the Project on Criminal Justice at the Cato Institute think-tank, said, “The practical effect of the ruling is that police officers can exercise 'extremely poor judgement' and harass citizens for pointless reasons -- and those citizens are without legal redress.”

He added, “The Framers of our Constitution would frankly be startled by the Supreme Court's cavalier treatment of the legal threshold by which citizens can be deprived of their liberty and thrown in jail.”

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## **10. Be Alert ... Children Driveway Warning Signs**

A parent's worst nightmare is to hear the screech of brakes, knowing that their children are outside playing.

Leslie Saba, creator of the Be Alert ..... Children Driveway Sign and mother of four young children, developed this powerful and worthwhile sign out of a need and concern to protect her children from the speeding and unaware motorist. According to Saba, just as parents protect their children by "child proofing" their home, strapping their kids into seat belts and car seats, and making sure they wear bike helmets, they must protect them in front of their own houses.

The concept of the bright lemon yellow 20" X 12 A-frame portable sign is to place it at the end of the driveway, on the sidewalk or edge of the yard. Saba, strongly believes "it is important to put it out only when the children are out so it DOES NOT become an everyday fixture that may ultimately be ignored." For example, says Saba, "when one sees the public works sign "Slow Children" in the same place for 15 years one may think to themselves "These kids must be off to college by now." Saba continues, "This Be Alert... Children sign has such an impact you can actually hear motorists taking their foot off the gas peddle."

Saba developed the sign in 1994, and realized the need was universal. It now appears in many children's catalogs.

Signs can be ordered online. Link to Site: [www.childsafety.com/](http://www.childsafety.com/)

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11. Toolkit for Helmet Promotion Programs from the Bicycle Helmet Safety Institute

References and resources for promoting helmets. Partial list of topics...

* Basic campaign advice: an overview of what a program can be.

* A fabulous manual for helmet promotion programs originally written by John Williams and the folks at Adventure Cycling.

* Statistics from various sources.

* Sources of inexpensive helmets.

* A collage of many ads for cheap helmets.

* Videos for helmet campaigns. One of them is free!

Link: www.bhsi.org/toolkit.htm

12. CPSC, Dynacraft Announce Recall of Boys' Mountain Bicycles Sold at Wal-Mart

Text w/ photo: www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/prerel/prhtml01/01132.html

WASHINGTON, D.C. - In cooperation with the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), Dynacraft Industries Inc., of San Rafael, Calif., is voluntarily recalling about 38,000 boys' mountain bicycles. The front-suspension forks on these bicycles can break during use, resulting in serious injury.

Dynacraft has received 33 reports of the front-suspension forks on these bicycles breaking, resulting in 32 injuries that included a blood clot in the brain, broken bones, cuts, bruises and chipped teeth.

These 20-inch, 21-speed, dual-suspension bicycles have the model name "NEXT SHOCKZONE" written on their orange frame in black lettering. A label on the frame near the crank housing reads, "Distributed by Dynacraft Industries" and "Made in China." Only the orange bicycles with model number 8536-33 are included in this recall. The model number is written on another label on the frame near the crank housing.

Wal-Mart stores sold these bicycles nationwide from September 1999 through March 2001 for about \$130.

Consumers should stop using these bicycles immediately, and call Dynacraft to receive a free replacement fork and to arrange for free installation. For more information, consumers should call Dynacraft at (800) 551-0032 between 10 a.m. and 7 p.m. ET Monday through Friday, visit their web site at www.dynacraftbikes.com.

Bicycles with a label at the bottom of the fork that reads, "Fork made Jan., 2000" or "Fork made July, 2000" are not part of this recall.

13. CPSC, Disney Store Announce Recall of Children's Costumes

Text w/ photo: www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/prerel/prhtml01/01129.html

WASHINGTON, D.C. - In cooperation with the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), the Disney Store, of Glendale, Calif., is voluntarily recalling about 54,000 Princess Ariel

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link for the AK-Prev & AK-EMSC list-serve: [http://chems.alaska.gov/ems\\_list\\_servers.htm](http://chems.alaska.gov/ems_list_servers.htm)  
link for the AHELP list-serve: <http://www.auroraweb.com/ahec/>

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